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Columbia University

## DREAMS.

THERE are subjects which have been dealt with by the weak and the designing, until Society has learnt to regard them as the peculiar property of these people. Whoever therefore selects one of them for investigation must expect to become an object of suspicion. He is pretty certain to be set down as willing to be deceived himself, which is bad ; or as meaning to deceive others, which is worse.

Such prejudices, unfortunate as they always are for the progress of science, we consider especially unfortunate as regards dreams. Being phenomena, they would be fair matter for study under any circumstances ; but bearing, as they do, on such interesting problems as those that concern life and spirit, they seem to us doubly worthy of attention.

Did savans agree to note and analyse such dreams as came under their own observation, and to make mutual exchange of facts, ideas, and conclusions, the results, we are persuaded, would prove very valuable, notably to the psychologist. But it is only on the dreams that come immediately under their own observation that the scientific may venture to reason with safety. Little reliance is to be placed on those recorded by history. While nearly all such come to us at second hand, a large proportion are evidently fabricated from beginning to end ; and most of the remainder have been as evidently remoulded by the narrators into things much more picturesque than the originals. Hardly one of them has that dreamy film—that envelope of mist and unreality—which is never wanting to the pictures beheld by the eyes of slumber.

Nor are the dreams told by people in general of much scientific value. Weak and fanciful minds dwell too intently upon their visions. They smooth here and develope there, unwittingly perhaps, but still very effectually—until their descriptions become a mixture, wherein it is impossible to distinguish that which is dream from that which is invention. The stronger-minded go to another extreme. They recount their dreams, if at all, with scorn or ridicule—giving us either a meagre skeleton or a caricature.

In our own opinion even the most extraordinary dreams are capable of rational explanation. Take, for example, those of religious enthusiasts. In every instance the visions of such people transport them to the mystic world, exhibiting it under aspects of delight or terror, according to their temperament. They are always soaring to heaven or diving to the infernal regions—always speeding off to the companionship of angels or demons

direction ; but Mr. Tennyson, who has produced some of the sweetest lyrics in the language, and who, even in his blank verse and in his "Idylls," writes with the kind of movement that belongs to the lyric poet, has a claim in this respect not readily to be satisfied. "Lord ! what a blessed thing it is," exclaims Dickens, of the "Idylls," "to read a man who really can write ! I thought nothing could be finer than the first poem, till I came to the third ; but when I had read the last, it seemed to me to be absolutely unapproachable." There is perhaps no modern poet who combines with a genius so exquisite, so profound a knowledge of his art. We may add, what the reader can scarcely fail to observe, that his supreme excellence is always to be found in the lyric. The more indeed that we examine the poetry of the age, the more evident will it appear that its principal achievements have been performed in this field. In America, Mr. Longfellow, Mr. Lowell, and the venerable Bryant, to name three poets only out of many, are chiefly to be distinguished as lyricists. In our own country, it will suffice to mention but the names of Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Coventry Patmore, Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Matthew Arnold (whose "Scholar Gipse," and "Forsaken Merman," by the way, are of almost peerless beauty), to show how thoroughly the poetical genius of the age is permeated with the spirit of lyric poetry.

Looking back over three centuries of our literature, it will be evident that the splendid achievements of this century are worthy of the early fathers of English poetry. It is surely remarkable that the most practical race in the world should have produced the noblest fictions, and the most imaginative verse.

J. D.

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—the staple of the dream being invariably *motion*. Now, we have observed that dreams in which motion predominates, are accompaniments of a certain state of the blood which, for lack of a better word, we will term thinness. This “thinness” may proceed from opposite causes—it may be the result of austerity, voluntary or enforced, or of indulgence that exhausts. With commonplace personages such dreams leave only disagreeable impressions. Not so with the enthusiast. Here the vision produced by the state of the blood, is acted upon by the ardent spirit of the visionary, upon which it reacts, in turn, with consequences most important to the world at large. Such dreams are accepted as revelations; and out of them are constructed dogmas which become, in time, the foundations of social institutions. Most of the doctrines which fastened so deeply on the Pagan mind of all climes and ages, and a large proportion of those which sank so deeply into the mind of mediæval Christianity, were deduced from the visions which mortifications or vices presented to the slumbers of enthusiasm. It is humiliating to think that creeds which exercise such tremendous influence over mankind, should have had such an origin. But that the fact is as we state no impartial student of history will deny.

Remarkable among dreams are those in which the intellect works with full power, and even attains, at times, results beyond reach in the waking state. Stories have been told of mathematicians mastering, on the pillow, difficulties which baffled them in the study, and of musicians and poets producing in slumber compositions quite equal to the best of their other efforts. Nor are such doings confined to master brains, like that of Coleridge: they are, indeed, much more common than the world would suspect. One of these curiosities of literature, heretofore unpublished, was produced, a good many years ago, by a lady of our acquaintance, who laid not the smallest claim to literary ability. We should premise that on the day previous she had been much interested by the *Sorrows of Werther*, a novel more fashionable then than now; and that she had supplemented this choice bit of reading by the study of the story and the songs of Sappho. She retired with fancy and feeling highly excited to dream a dream of love, wherein there was much adventure, plenty of passion, and not a little despair—quite a three-volume-romance sort of dream, which, however, as the lady took care to observe, had in no part the smallest foundation in the reality of her own life—she being then altogether heart whole; that is when awake. The despairing phase wound up the vision; and the dreamer awoke, just as she had completed the following lines, which she lost not a moment in committing to paper:—

## I.

Thus, thus to meet, though more than sweet,  
Is but new cause for sighing;  
Grieved, though impassioned, must we greet—  
Denying, still denying!

## II.

We whisper, tremble, gaze, and part,  
 From our own feelings flying;  
 The one deep wish of either heart  
 Denying, still denying!

## III.

Oh, Love! what anguish dost thou bring,  
 When, stern and uncomplying,  
 On Transport's verge thou foldest wing—  
 Denying, still denying!

## IV.

Say, will there never dawn a day  
 For Hope and Have's allying?  
 Or must existence pine away  
 Denying, still denying?

We have ourselves to plead guilty to the charge of perpetrating a similar piece of involuntary folly. On a beautiful April evening not long ago, we paused in a footpath, leading through a vale in Buckinghamshire, to enjoy the prospect—one of the prettiest we ever saw. Hills rose gently on all sides; there were long strips of meadow and broad stretches of woodland; there were hedgerows and cattle groups, in plenty; there was a rivulet, shadowed by rows of willows, stealing along at our feet; and there was the tower of a church, not less than six hundred years old, rising over a clump of beeches, some furlongs to the left.

Nor is the scene without its stirring reminiscences. To begin with, the ground we trod once formed a portion of the possessions of the truculent brother of the Conqueror, Bishop Odo. The vaults of the quaint old church contain the remains of mediæval abbot and crusader, and of modern statesman, admiral, and bishop. Not far off, on one side moulders the body of William Penn, under the shadow of the oldest Quaker meeting-house in England. At an equal distance, on another side, stands the oak which the poet Waller turned into a study; and in the immediate vicinity exists the cottage in which Milton completed *Paradise Lost*. Were we to climb one of the hills in front, we should come upon a monument erected in memory of the navigator Cook; from thence we might behold, on the declivity of a neighbouring hill, the spot where resided the tough old knight who boxed the ears of Sir Francis Drake for presuming to appropriate his crest; and a short walk to the southward would bring us to the mansion erected by the infamous Jeffries. Widening the circle by a few miles, we have the haunts of Hampden, the Black Prince, the poets Shelley and Gray, the historian Gibbon, the demagogue Wilkes and his wild confrères of Medenham, and a hundred other celebrities. At every stride, too, may be detected souvenirs of Norman, Saxon, Dane, and Roman; in short, the whole history—political, literary, warlike, and ecclesiastical—of the grand old island is concentrated in the



atmosphere that wraps the place, though it (Chalfont St. Giles) is hardly ever mentioned elsewhere ; and yet no spot in England better merits visit, were it only for its exceeding quiet and seclusion. There is not a railway station within six miles, not a chimney stack, not one contrivance for money-spinning. It is deliciously rustic—a quiet country hamlet, one of the very few patches of the lazy, dreamy past whose seclusion has not yet been invaded by the far too busy and utilitarian present.

The beauties of the scene mingled most exquisitely for us with its memories ; and while we paused to feast thereon, a little incident occurred which added the only thing wanting to complete our enjoyment. From the brow of a hill in front came a mellow burst of song, and then, winding down the incline, appeared the singers—a group of peasants returning from their labour, with their jackets slung picturesquely over their shoulders. The ditty was a primitive thing, descriptive of rustic courtship ; but distance, echo, and surroundings eliminated all that was rude, leaving sweetness only behind.

The scene haunted us all the evening, and was reproduced by our dreams, in the latter etherealised into something far too beautiful to be fixed by description. A sunset sky so glorious earth never saw ; the trees put on more than tropical luxuriance, the brook broadened into a magnificent river, the hills raised themselves to mountains, and the church expanded into a marvel of ecclesiastical architecture ; still the objects all maintained their relative positions as in reality. While we contemplated the gorgeous vision with wonder and delight, down the mountain side before us streamed a long array of figures—demigods in limb, peasants in garb, and poets every one in countenance. Foremost came Milton, leading the march, and in his track followed all the lords of English song. Miles off behind the river, yet were they as clearly visible as though just at hand. They sang, to an air that came sounding over the water with bewitching effect, the following song, every word of which sank deep into our memory :—

#### LABOUR SONG.

##### I.

When the sun is high  
Our craft let us ply—  
To labour yield the day.  
But when night falls,  
Oh, then Love calls!  
And the call we must obey.

##### II.

When darkens the sky  
Our toils we lay by,  
And to the tryst away.  
For when night falls,  
Oh, then Love calls!  
And the call we must obey.

It is not difficult to account for such dreams. Intense application to any theme is certain to produce them. Fancy highly excited, or Reason deeply absorbed in its labours, will not always sink to repose with the body of its owner. Rousing up again in dreams, it will continue the lines of thought which it had been pursuing during the day, but always with more or less of the playful waywardness which an Ariel might be supposed to exhibit when released from the control of a Prospero.

Perhaps the most curious specimen of this class of dreams that ever came under our notice was this one. The subject was a boy of thirteen, busily employed during the day and devoting his evenings to the classroom. To allow time for study he rose early and retired late, never wasted a moment, denied himself everything in the shape of recreation, and with the exception of his walks between the school-room and his place of business, took no exercise. The classes he attended were formed in great part of adults, all of whom had much more leisure than himself, and most of whom were merely renewing their acquaintance with former reading; yet the boy managed to keep abreast of the very best of his class-mates. Of course such exertions could not be made by a mere child with impunity. After six or seven months of them, he became subject to a singular malady. He never left his books so long as his eyes would keep open. When they refused to labour longer he retired—to fall at once into a heavy sleep. From this, however, he was sure to start, in half-an-hour or thereabouts, under the influence of night-mare, which compelled him to recite aloud every word of the lessons of the day. The thing was most painful, but there was no escape from it. Once in the grip of the tormenting fiend, he was constrained to go on repeating declensions, conjugations, trigonometric formulæ, and so on, to the very last syllable. Then the fit left him to a disturbed and unrefreshing slumber. There was no remedy for the disease save discontinuance of study, and to this the boy would not consent—even though this most repulsive night-mare was, visibly and rapidly, sapping his constitution. At length he was favoured with a strange dream. A face seemed to bend over him—one that he had never seen before, but whose features remained ever afterward fixed in his memory. In the decline of life, he used to tell a most interesting story of his meeting with that face, twenty-four years later, and of the decisive influence which its owner exercised over his destiny. This face, which he described as beautiful, spoke in tones delightfully sweet, to this effect—“If somebody will watch by your bed and when the night-mare seizes you, recite a certain passage” (which we shall specify presently) “you will be set free to sleep in peace.” It was not until the dream recurred more than once that the dreamer ventured to mention it. It was laughed at by all, save an elder sister, who made up her mind to give a fair trial to the remedy so curiously suggested. She did so when her brother was next undergoing his torture. Hardly had she begun to speak than he ceased to go over his lessons, and taking up the passage after her, he went through it to the end—quite involuntarily as before, but very differently, with an ease and



comfort perfectly indescribable. When the recitation was over he sunk into a calm and refreshing sleep. The experiment was repeated night after night, and always with still more satisfactory results than before. By degrees the pest relaxed its grasp, and in nine or ten days vanished for ever. The passage employed was "the Lord's Prayer."

The dreamer used to explain the matter thus:—Once when thinking of his strange affliction, as he often did, and casting about for an antidote, there occurred to his memory a piece of old reading, in which it was stated that the wounds made one day by the application of heated irons, might be cured on the next by a similar application. While turning the story over in his mind, a conception of the remedy which, in the end, proved beneficial, glanced before him, but so vaguely and for so short a period that he could not grasp it. To this passing idea, and to his efforts to arrest it, he attributed—rightly as we think—the material portion of the vision. The passage recommended for recitation he accounted for by the fact that he had been piously trained. But his later opinion was that a paragraph from a profane author would have served just as well. As to the reappearance of the dream-face in real life—a notion in which he was obstinate to an extent inconceivable in a mind so logical—we may remark that strong imaginings and intense affections play strange tricks with our impressions.

More curious than even intellectual dreams are those which are retrospective and premonitory. That there are such things candid people will admit. That there may be such things reasonable people will hardly deny. It is but natural that an event which has made a deep impression upon a vivid brain, should be recalled in sleep. It is just as natural that an event which is anticipated with earnest hope or apprehension, should be prefigured in a dream by the same brain. In the former case, the dream will be the shadow of a real occurrence, and correct in proportion to the depth of the impression left by that occurrence. In the latter case, the shadow will be truthful in proportion to the accuracy with which we measure the circumstances which are moulding the event so anxiously expected.

But occasionally, premonitory and retrospective dreams present faithful pictures of events, with which we could have had no previous acquaintance, and concerning which we could have formed no anticipation. Twenty years ago there dwelt in a large seaport a family, the head of which was a widow, in feeble health. One of her sons, a youth of eighteen, was employed on a vessel trading to South America. News had reached home of his recovery from yellow fever, a thing that is thought to secure immunity from the disease for the future. His relatives, therefore, felt no apprehension concerning him; nevertheless they awaited the arrival of the ship with some anxiety. While they were waiting thus, a friend who took deep interest in the youth dreamt to this purpose:—

He seemed to be seated in a reception-room on the ground-floor, opposite a window looking into the street. In one corner, by the window,

sat the widow; and in another corner, on the same side of the room, sat one of her daughters. While the three sat thus, looking at one another in silence—in the dream be it remembered—a tall, sailor-like man, of the best class, roughly dressed as if he had but just stepped ashore, passed the window and knocked. Being admitted, he walked straight across the room to the chair which had just been vacated by the daughter, and spoke as follows: “Mrs. —, I am Captain —, of the ship —, and I deeply regret that I have to inform you of the death of your son.”

Such a dream he who dreamt naturally thought far too unpleasant to communicate to the parties chiefly concerned. Still, finding himself seated the following evening precisely as in the dream, he felt compelled, in spite of his unwillingness, to relate it. Hardly had he concluded when the figure, as he had seen it, passed the window, knocked, and was ushered into the apartment, where he acted and spoke in every particular as foreshadowed. It may be added that neither the family nor their friend had the slightest knowledge of the arrival of the vessel, and that nobody could have anticipated the captain in bearing the fatal news. The dreamer could not help remarking that his relation of his dream prepared the mother for the announcement, which, abrupt as it was, might otherwise have given her a dangerous shock.

Are such visions to be accounted for on reasonable grounds? We think so. In conjunction with what are called “forebodings,” they teach ourselves to believe that intense love, or hate as intense, maintains a connection between those under its influence, no matter how widely they may be sundered.

Organised bodies—perhaps we might say all bodies—are for ever giving off particles—those at rest, in every direction; those in motion behind them, in one long stream. These particles carry with them the characteristics of the body from whence they part. We know it to be so in the case of flowers, otherwise there would be no such thing as scent, and assuredly no such thing as distinction of scent. And we may presume that it is so in other instances. Nor is it presumption only. That there must be something of the sort is evident from the success with which the dog traces his master through a crowd, or along a well-frequented thoroughfare.

It requires but a small stretch of imagination to conceive that the particles thrown off by human beings bear the impress of their thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, and expectations—as they exist at the moment of separation. We may conceive, too, that there exist in us senses acute enough to distinguish, under favourable circumstances, all the peculiarities of these particles when they are brought in contact with us. As to that contact, it is not so very unreasonable to suppose, in these days of electric wonders, that the fixed affection of persons may give a fixed direction to such emanations, and thus originate and maintain, through all chances and changes, those delicate chains of intercommunication between friends and foes, to which, rather than to supernatural agency, we prefer to ascribe our startling, truthful dreams and premonitions.